# Netwatch

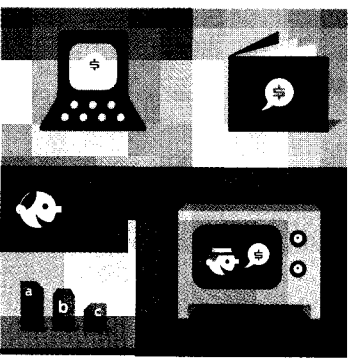
By Jim Carroll

*Your guide to business & accounting on the Internet*

# Nurture the geek in you

When chartered accountants focus on IT, it's not simply because we think technology is neat. We keep on top of tech trends and issues because it helps us do our jobs well. Indeed, "information and information technology is one of the six specific competencies expected of experienced CAs as defined in the CA Competency Map. We need to know how to best manage and implement the wealth of technology systems within our client base or employer, as well as to determine on an ongoing basis how evolving technologies might affect business strategies, threats and opportunities.

One way to stay current with technology is by monitoring the online drumbeat. Imagine the Internet as an endless conversation of millions of chattering voices, each focusing on a multitude of topics and issues. It's not surprising that a great deal of the information relates to technology itself, and if you learn how to tune in to the drumbeat, you can keep yourself informed.



A good place to start is Slashdot, an online haven for hard-core computer geeks. Much of what is on the site might mystify you, but it also offers fascinating tidbits that will inform you on emerging technology and business issues long before they appear anywhere else. (Among the technical cognoscenti, it is truly an honour to be mentioned on Slashdot.) In fact, Slashdot is so popular that many sites mentioned in its pages are instantly "slashdotted" (i.e., overwhelmed with so many visitors that their Web servers crash).

There are many other tech-oriented sites worth monitoring; two of my favourites are Techdirt and The Register. The latter has a somewhat tongue-in-cheek view of the world — for example, the day I visited it reported with much glee that "Microsoft has admitted that its Windows debugging facility is itself subject to a security bug." Then there's the world of online blogs, sites in which individuals post a regular stream of information about a specific area they are interested in. One of the best technology blogs is Dan Gillmor's eJournal; he's a columnist with the *San Jose Mercury News* in Silicon Valley who often reports tech news before other media pick up on it. And just for the fun of it, check out the Daypop Top 40 — the site lists popular blogs, which comes in handy for tracking what is really hot on the Internet.

Security is, of course, another area of technology CAs need to stay current with. If you want to know how to track new security exploits and issues, read RISKS (the self-described "forum on risks to the public in computers and related systems") and immerse yourself in the SecurityFocus site. Then there is the world of general technology news sites, which report on e-commerce and business issues, such as TechWeb.

The fact is, these sites barely scratch the surface of the news information to be found out there — you probably have many sites you monitor on an ongoing basis. The key point is, evolving technologies continue to have a huge impact on the way business is conducted, and so it is implicit upon all CAs to "geekify" themselves enough to stay on top of things.

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**TECH-ORIENTED SITES**

**Slashdot** www.slashdot.org

**Techdirt** www.techdirt.com

**The Register** www.theregister.co.uk

**Dan Gillmor's eJournal**
www.siliconvalley.com/mld/siliconvalley/business/columnists/dan_gillmor/ejournal/

**Daypop Top 40** www.daypop.com/top/

**RISKS** http://catless.ncl.ac.uk/Risks

**SecurityFocus** http://online.securityfocus.com/

**TechWeb** http://www.techweb.com/